

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Terry Goddard Announces \$500,000 Settlement with Scottsdale Dating Service**

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Feb. 23, 2009) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced a \$500,000 settlement with Sun West Video, Inc., doing business as Great Expectations for Singles (Great Expectations), a dating service located in Scottsdale.

According to the settlement, Great Expectations must pay \$250,000 in restitution to eligible consumers who were victimized by the company's deceptive practices. The remaining \$250,000 will be paid to the state for consumer fraud prevention.

The settlement also requires the company to correct its alleged deceptive business practices, including misrepresenting the makeup of its member database and the status of its members, illegally obtaining consumers' protected credit information and extending the term of its membership agreements beyond that allowed by law.

In June 2008, Goddard filed a lawsuit alleging that Great Expectations violated the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act and the Arizona Dating Referral Services Act. Also named in the lawsuit were Sun West Video's President John R. Meriggi, Great Expectations' Director Michael Buhler and Sales Representative Geri Schencker.

The lawsuit alleges that Great Expectations used coercive sales tactics, misrepresentations and other deceptive practices to sell expensive dating service memberships to Arizona consumers, typically costing thousands of dollars. The alleged illegal practices include:

- Misrepresenting to consumers the overall number of Great Expectations' participating members, the number of participating members in certain age groups and the number of new members joining the service each month. Great Expectations also told consumers that two to three marriages occurred between members every month when it had no credible basis for such statements.
- Misrepresenting to consumers that it had conducted a criminal background check on all of its members.
- Using membership agreements that illegally extended initial memberships beyond one year and were designed to mislead consumers to believe they had no right to cancel or rescind the agreements.

- Unlawfully obtaining consumers' credit information as soon as they arrived at the Great Expectations office to meet with a representative, before they received a sales presentation or agreed to purchase a membership.
- Using high-pressure sales tactics during one-on-one, hours-long presentations to consumers, during which sales representatives urged consumers to contact their credit card companies to get an increased credit limit sufficient to pay for a membership.

Assistant Attorney General Cherie Howe handled this case.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud by Great Expectations or others, please contact the Attorney General's Office in Phoenix at 602.542.5763, in Tucson at 520.628.6504 or outside the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas at 1.800.352.8431. To file a complaint in person, the Attorney General's Office has satellite offices throughout the state with volunteers available to help. Locations and hours of operation are posted on the Attorney General's Web site, [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov). Consumers can also file complaints on the Attorney General's Web site.

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